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ABSTRACT

In 1986 the National Occupational Information Coordinating Committee (NOICC), in collaboration with leaders in the counseling profession, began a major initiative in the United States to strengthen and enhance comprehensive, competency-based career counseling, guidance, and education programs. These efforts led to the establishment of national guidelines for comprehensive career guidance programs at all educational levels. The National Career Development Guidelines (NCDG) are designed to encourage career development as a life-long pursuit, guided by local programs supported by well trained state level leadership. They support the concept of career development as a process through which individuals learn about themselves in relation to the world of work. Competencies in the guidelines are grouped into three elements of the career development process: self-knowledge, educational and occupational exploration, and career planning. This paper presents a brief history of the Guidelines, discusses each of the Guidelines, and includes lessons learned from the initiative, and benefits for those utilizing the guidelines. (JDM)

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TURNING POINTS: MANAGING CAREER CHANGE
International Conference
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GUIDELINES FOR CAREER DEVELOPMENT: PROGRAMS AND SERVICES IN THE UNITED STATES

By Juliette Lester
NATIONAL OCCUPATIONAL INFORMATION COORDINATING COMMITTEE

This presentation is part of a panel moderated by Stu Conger of Canada that includes a presentation by Phil Jarvis on Canada's Blueprint for Life/Work Designs and by Agnes Watanabe-Muraoka on Japan's Competency-based Model for Career Development, with respondents from Australia. Both the Canadian Blueprint and the Japan Competency-based Model are adapted from the United States' National Career Development Guidelines.

DEVELOPING NATIONAL GUIDELINES: THE NEED AND THE PROCESS

Like many other countries, the United States is feeling the impact of major changes in the labor market and the work force. More and more public leaders have expressed concern about the status and the future of our economy and our workers. As in other countries around the globe, we have been grappling with issues related to workforce development, education, and training.

Various federal laws in the U.S. have recognized the importance of career information, guidance and education as part of that effort. Among them was the legislation reauthorizing vocational education in 1984. It encouraged initiatives to improve, expand, and extend career guidance and counseling programs to meet the career development needs of all youth and adults.

The legislation reflected needs at the grass roots level, needs that are familiar to many of you. Dramatic changes in the U.S. and world economy, technology, and workplace practices had focused public attention on the importance of preparing youth for a changing labor market and of providing assistance to adults facing career transitions. Many state guidance supervisors and other leaders in the counseling profession were seeking ways to strengthen and improve existing career development programs to meet these needs.

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In the United States, the National Occupational Information Coordinating Committee and the State Occupational Information Coordinating Committees (NOICC/SOICCs) provides an infrastructure that fosters collaboration between producers and users of occupational and career information. We offer a forum for bringing together stakeholders who develop and improve career guidance materials and training and those who can benefit from the production and use of career and labor market information and we were able to use that forum to provide support for the development of our National Career Development Guidelines.

The National Career Development Guidelines initiative was launched in 1986, partly in response to the interest within the counseling community and partly in response to the legislation. It was not a project NOICC could undertake alone. It was a cooperative effort of the leading professional career counseling and development organizations. This collaboration was essential to ensure that the Guidelines would be comprehensive and represent national consensus.

Several advisory committees were established to ensure the national consensus.

- A **Project Leadership Team** set policy direction for the effort. It included representatives of five key national professional associations (similar to IAEVG), the U.S. Department of Education, and NOICC.

- A **Project Review and Implementation Planning Group** provided direction for reviewing and implementing the Guidelines at the state and local levels. It included practitioners from all levels of career guidance and counseling. They came from state, local, and business and industry settings.

- An **Expert Review Panel** composed of nationally recognized experts in career development, counselor education, guidance, and counseling provided conceptual overview. They also reviewed all draft materials.

It was essential that the Guidelines be conceptually sound, comprehensive, and useful. Thus, the project drew on expert professional advice and review combined with field-based experience. More than 150 individuals served in an evaluative capacity during their development. The Guidelines have been endorsed by several national professional associations and adopted in more than 46 states.

The Guidelines were based on earlier work by experts in the counseling field and in specific states. They were field tested initially in four states X California, Mississippi, North Dakota, and Pennsylvania X beginning in 1987. A year later, NOICC awarded a second round of grants for field testing in six more states X Iowa, Missouri, New Jersey, Oklahoma, Washington, and Wisconsin.

Suggestions from sites in these ten states were incorporated into the final version of the National Career Development Guidelines handbooks. In 1989, NOICC began providing other states with funds to implement the Guidelines. Several states have also implemented the Guidelines using local, state, and other federal funds. In addition to funding, NOICC also promoted the implementation of the Guidelines through an array of materials, technical assistance, and training.

WHAT ARE THE NATIONAL CAREER DEVELOPMENT GUIDELINES?

The National Career Development Guidelines foster career development at all levels and in many different program settings. They are national guidelines, **not** federal standards. They set forth the tasks that career counselors agree are essential to their work. They serve as a blueprint for career counselors in establishing an effective counseling program.

The Guidelines are designed to support local program improvement, to encourage state-level leadership, and to strengthen counselor education for career development. They can be used to:

- Establish state and local guidelines and standards
- Strengthen existing career development and counseling programs in schools and other educational institutions, human service agencies, business, and other organizations
- Enhance student or client achievement
- Review and revise career development programs
- Support program evaluation

The Guidelines represent professional consensus in three main areas: 1) desired student or client outcomes, 2) institutional capabilities, and 3) personnel requirements. Let me explain these.

First, the Guidelines identify desired outcomes for participants in comprehensive career guidance programs at four developmental levels. Twelve competencies participants should gain and indicators that they have mastered them are specified for four educational program settings (elementary through postsecondary) and for adults. These 12 competencies address three areas of career development: 1) self-knowledge, 2) educational and occupational exploration, and 3) career planning X at each level.

Second, the Guidelines describe institutional capabilities needed to provide good programs at each level. They address essential structure and support that a school or agency must make available, including administrative commitments, facilities, materials, and

equipment. They provide criteria for setting up new programs, evaluating the effectiveness of ongoing programs, and for improving program quality.

Third, **the Guidelines identify staff requirements and competencies** needed by counselors and other career development personnel to deliver high quality programs.

GUIDELINES PRODUCTS, TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE, AND TRAINING

In 1996, the original five handbooks for local level NCDG were revised, updated and combined into a single publication, *National Career Development Guidelines K-Adult Handbook 1996*. The new handbook contains most of the information in previous local handbooks updated to reflect usage in new initiatives such as One-Stop Career Centers and School-To-Work systems. The NCDG assists career and workforce development organizations, educational institutions and private organizations in:

- Strengthening career and workforce development programs at all levels
- Enhancing student and customer achievement
- Adopting state and local career development guidelines
- Revising career and workforce development programs
- Improving career and workforce development through structured evaluation

NOICC early on provided technical support and training to promote widespread adoption of the Guidelines. Experience at the state and local level was shared at regional and national conferences and teleconferences and in the 1992 publication, *From Pilot to Practice: Strengthening Career Development Programs*.

Current activities include the development of two modules of practitioner training: one on developing administrative support for Guidelines implementation (marketing) and one on integrating the Guidelines into the academic curriculum. The new modules incorporate both practitioner training and train-the-trainer training. This training will be delivered in March 1999.

LINKAGE TO RELATED PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

The NOICC/SOICC Network has continued to promote collaborative efforts to address needs in career development. For example, the Guidelines competencies have been incorporated into computer-based career information delivery systems operated by most states in the U.S. The competencies have also provided the basis for developing career planning portfolios for individuals.

Counselors can use these portfolios to guide students and adults in career transition through the career development process and document their progress. The Guidelines are also the basis for the career development standards for the National Standards for School Counseling Programs, developed by the American School Counselor Association.

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The international partnership between Canada and the United States has contributed to bringing Canada's Real Game series to United States' students. A crosswalk now exists between the Real Game series and the competencies in the Guidelines, an example of linkage between countries as well as programs.

From its earliest years, the NOICC/SOICC Network has worked on developing training programs and materials on the use of occupational and labor market information. Curriculum guides and materials, trainer's manuals, and train-the-trainer programs have been produced for counselor educators, counselors, and career development facilitators or paraprofessionals. These training programs also have been linked to the Guidelines.

LESSONS FROM THE GUIDELINES INITIATIVE

The National Career Development Guidelines have provided states with an important tool for strengthening career development. Their impact in promoting improvements was enhanced by other key initiatives of that period. Among these were the development of comprehensive state guidance models, state educational reform efforts, emphasis on the need for assistance to at-risk youth, the use of federal funding to support career guidance, and the publication of several major national reports on changes in the workplace. Certainly the climate and the times were right for the introduction of the Guidelines. But other factors played a role in the success of this initiative, and many useful lessons emerged from this experience. Let me focus on a few of them.

All too often, educational innovations or improvements are introduced with great fanfare, flourish briefly, and then disappear. **The challenge is to make sure our efforts to improve career guidance take root and spread.** Once the National Career Development Guidelines initiative was successfully launched, we faced the challenge of moving beyond promising innovation to widespread practice.

This experience underscores the importance of my first lesson: **encourage leadership and broad participation by stakeholders at all levels**: national, state, and local.

A related lesson for developing national standards is to make sure they do **address real needs at the grass roots level**.

Third, we learned to **build on successful state or local models and experience**. This has several benefits. It is economical, and it avoids duplication of effort.

Fourth, it helps to **provide seed money or incentive funds** to encourage state and local participation.

It is essential to **offer professional development and training** to build capacity at the

state and local level.

To increase public and professional understanding of the Guidelines, we learned to **take advantage of technology to reach a wider audience** more efficiently.

Another practical and useful lesson is to **link new products and training to the Guidelines**, as in the Real Game series.

To reiterate one final point: in all of these efforts, we have welcomed opportunities to **collaborate with other stakeholders** in professional organizations; local, state, and federal agencies; and the private sector, as well as other countries. This is critical to the success of any effort to establish national or international standards for career development.

Benefits for Stakeholders

I realize that talking to this assembly about the value of comprehensive career development and counseling programs is like preaching to the choir. But I want to leave you with some thoughts about the benefits for stakeholders. For my basic text, I have turned to the Missouri Department of Education's Comprehensive Guidance Model (NOICC, 1989) and reports from states that have used the Guidelines. The message is enthusiastic and positive.

Students benefit. They learn to make decisions. They gain broader knowledge of themselves and others X and of our changing world. They also have more opportunities to interact with counselors and learn about career exploration and the development process. They have greater self-esteem and career maturity.

Parents benefit. The program provides support regarding their child's educational development and long-range planning. Parents have more opportunities to meet with counselors and obtain resources when needed.

Teachers benefit. They become part of a team effort to address key skills and competencies. They see counselors as a resource and career guidance as valuable.

Local boards of education benefit from a state model or guidelines. They have a rationale for including a comprehensive guidance program in the school system and information for district patrons. They have a basis for determining funding allocations. They have data on student attainment of competencies.

Business, industry, and labor benefit. They have more opportunities to collaborate with the schools and participate actively in developing work-based components of the total school program. Ultimately, their potential workforce will be more mature, more knowledgeable about the workplace and career fields, and better prepared for work as a result of having participated in a career development program.

Administrators benefit. A state model provides them with a program structure and

specific content. It provides a means of evaluating guidance program efforts and enhances the image of the career guidance program in the community.

Guidance personnel benefit. They have a clearly defined role, with responsibilities for specific student competencies. Non-guidance functions are reduced and sometimes eliminated. They have opportunities to reach a large majority of students. They have a tool for program management. Their professional and personal confidence increase.

The National Career Development Guidelines represent the template for counselors, educators and workforce development professionals to set goals, objectives and outcomes for their programs. Internationally, partnerships such as the NOICC agreement with Canada for co-development of programs and the technical assistance provided for the Japanese model contribute to the overall success of programs such as the Guidelines. Therefore, we welcome other countries collaboration in the development and implementation of career development guidelines.

A detailed description of the National Career Development Guidelines, the competencies, and resources related to them is available on NOICC's website: **http://www.noicc.gov**. The full text of the *K-Adult Handbook*, as well as several other publications related to the Guidelines, will be available in our online International Career Development Library when it goes on the Web this spring. Links to the Library will be posted on www.noicc.gov. For additional information contact:

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